

Leydene House compilation

	
Leydene House	The staircase

Notes on the building of Leydene House

From Meon Matters, letter by L.H.Tyrode, who Lady Peel's head chauffeur when Leydene House was being built ...

There is one distinction about Leydene House that may be unique. I believe that no larger private house had been built for at least half a century, nor has been built since.

It was in 1913, after a large number of journeys through the South and West of England, that Earl and Countess Peel decided that the site at the top of Hyden Hill promised to be the ideal spot for a house; that it would have the necessary advantages that they required, namely an elevated position giving extensive views, a clear, clean and invigorating air softened by the lower grounds to the west and south, nearness to a large town or city, yet far enough to avoid the noise and smoke and, also, near enough to London to make the journey there and back easily in a day. Cars were then just coming into their own as a means of general transport.

Any first impression was one of complete peace. Where the house now stands were sloping grounds, thick with wild strawberries, a number of grazing sheep and a variety of wild flora and fauna. Among the latter might be seen in numbers, Admirals (butterfly variety) and Wrens (feathered).

The major portion of the estate of 16,000 acres was bought from Lord Hotham. Plans were prepared and in the spring of 1914, work began with direct labour, mostly local; levelling and foundations were well in hand.

Lord and Lady Peel had decided to adapt a farmhouse at Coombe Cross for their use, to watch and supervise the building, but with the advent in August of the First World war, all work ceased on building Leydene House.

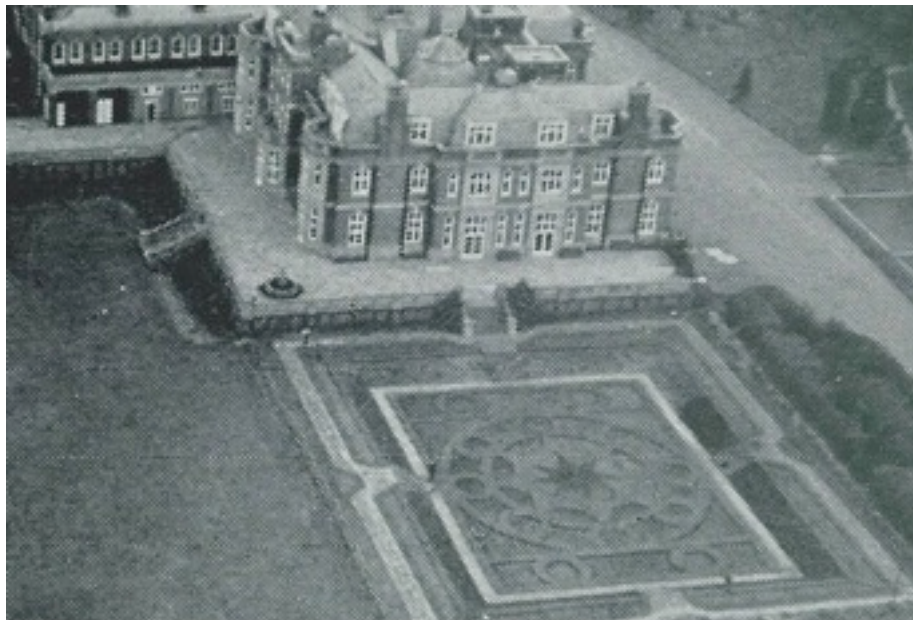
It was not until the summer of 1919 that work was recommenced on the site. Plans had to be curtailed slightly as money values had depreciated. The first thing to be done was to shift the cart track which went between the house site and prospective garages, to a line further north. This cart track was on a pre-Roman road running in a straight line from Buster Hill to old Winchester Hill and the Meon Valley.

To resume – work proceeded apace with a large body of artisans and workmen, steam tractors and lorries, moving chalk and fetching supplies. The stone used was Belgian limestone and the two fireplaces in the man hall are of the same material, which took a fine polish. It was landed at Littlehampton, brought by train to Havant, and thence by lorry.

The bricks were specially made by the Rowlands Brick Works, and the main staircase by a firm in Gosport.

In the autumn of 1924, sufficient rooms were completed to enable the owners to move in, but it was early 1925 before one house, garages and cottages were ready.

At first, the approaches were of local gravel, but this in wet weather was much too friendly and stuck to one's boots in quantity. So it was decided to concrete the drives. In the meanwhile, the rose gardens, dry tennis courts and the broad walks to main vegetable and fruit gardens were added. (It is worth noting that although Lord Peel had been Prime Minister¹ of Great Britain, it was Lady Peel who brought Leydene House from the fortunes her family had made from selling the new linoleum floor covering. The rose garden is still laid out as it was in 1926, in the design of the most popular selling linoleum tile of the time.)



¹ Not true – see Wikipedia article below. He was Secretary of State for India, First Commissioner of Works, Lord Privy Seal and chairman of the Peel Commission which presented for the first time in its period the British Mandate of Palestine.

From 1927 onwards, the summers saw many brilliant weekend parties; the Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth was a frequent guest.

Autumns and winters saw the shooting parties at which lunch was taken in a rustic hut in Hyden Wood. On one occasion, the footmen had been sent down early to make up the fire in the hut, but overdid it, and by the time the guns arrived for lunch, their warmth was the smouldering remains of the hut.

1939 saw the outbreak of the Second World War. That year, German landed a string of 3 HE bombs and one oilcan just to the left going out the gate, which broke the wing of a pheasant. Later a string of incendiaries landed on either side of the house, without touching it.

Later, however, it was apparently learned in Germany that the Royal Navy were about, but the best they could do was a land mine to the East and a few HEs in the woods. As you know, the RN Signals took over in 1941 and decided it was a good place to stay.

Eleanor Countess Peel

From Meon Matters, October 84.

James Williamson, later to become Lord Ashton, was a wealthy Lancaster linoleum manufacturer, born in 1842, who possessed more than a fair share of eccentricities.



Ashton Memorial, near Lancaster –
built by Lord Ashton

Unsurprisingly, his only child Eleanor inherited his fortune as well as his business ability and an obsessive antipathy towards local authorities.

When she married William Wellesley Peel, grandson of the famous Sir Robert, in 1899, her father's wedding present was a settlement of £800,000 – today's equivalent being over ten times that sum. Peel became an MP in 1900, afterwards attaining ministerial status, inherited his father's viscountcy and in 1929 was created the first earl.

The Peels' decision to build a country home in East Meon was reached in 1913 (see earlier piece for details of building ...).

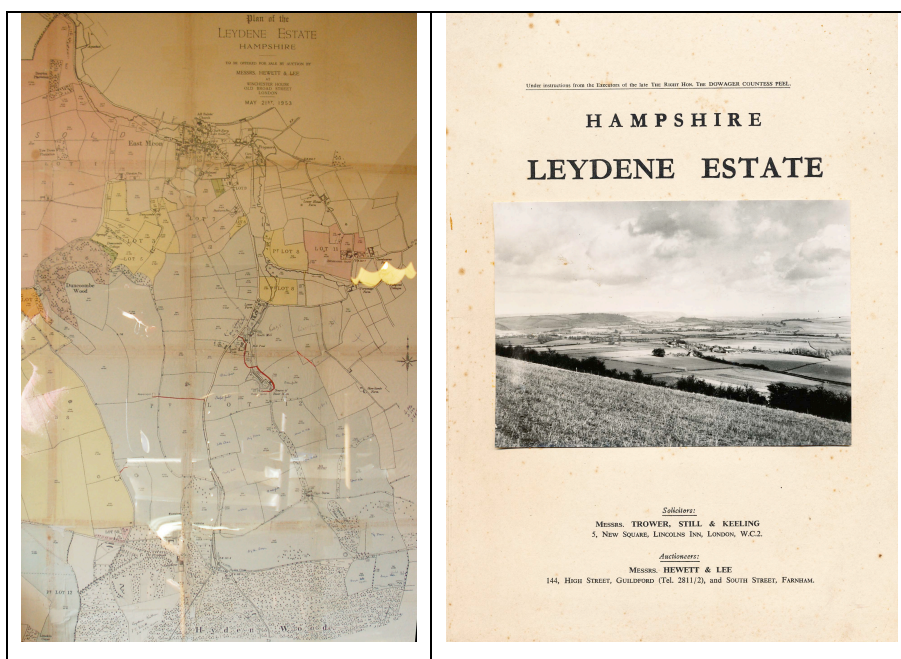
Employed staff included 14 gardeners, 3 chauffeurs, a butler, cook, lady's maid, 2 footmen, hall boy, 4 house maids, kitchen maid and scullery maid.

Lord Peel's career necessitated much of his time being spent in London. Meanwhile, Lady Peel, unless entertaining guests, led a life of Spartan simplicity. Her lunch often consisted of a bowl of soup, served on an outdoor terrace, irrespective of the weather, for she was a fresh air fanatic.

An extreme reserve almost amounted to pathological shyness and she went out of her way to avoid social contacts. Habitually dressing "like a tramp", in ankle-length shabby black clothes, she seemed to prefer the company of a herd of pedigree Saddleback pigs. Though the mother of a son and daughter, she had little liking for children, either her own or other people's.

As for the Leydene Estate, successive purchases of farm and woodland eventually built up a land empire of over 10,300 acres in East Meon and adjoining parishes. In 1941, Leydene was requisitioned by the Admiralty and became HMS Mercury.

Lord Peel had died in 1937 and Eleanor bought and took up residence at Hendersyde, a 1,600 acre estate in Southern Scotland, where she could indulge her passion for salmon fishing. Following her death in 1949, the Leydene Estate was sold by auction in 51 lots, many of which were acquired by sitting tenant farmers.



Her fortune, sworn at over £4 millions, was cut by death duties to under £1 million, the bulk of which was settled on charitable trusts. But the capital value of that fund has increased to over £2million, with an annual income of more than £200,000.

To follow this picture of an eccentric personality, it is fair to add a few words about here entirely normal progeny. Her son Arthur, who succeeded to the viscountcy, became Lord Lieutenant and an Honorary Freeman of Lancaster, as well as holding many other public offices. Her daughter, Lady Doris Blacker, well known in East Meon, became a County Councillor for 22 years, as well as being a magistrate and involved in activities with a special concern for the welfare of children. Her twin sons, David and Brian, are both County Councillors, one in West Sussex and the other in Hampshire.

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William Robert Wellesley Peel, 1st Earl Peel GCSI, GBE, PC, TD (7 January 1867 – 28 September 1937) was a British politician.



Background and education

The eldest son of Arthur Wellesley Peel, 1st Viscount Peel and Adelaide Dugdale, Peel was born in London in 1867. His father was the fifth and youngest son of Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel. He was educated at Harrow and Balliol College, Oxford,[1] where he was secretary of the Oxford Union.[2] In 1893 he was called to the bar at the Inner Temple, and practised as a barrister before taking the

position of special correspondent for the Daily Telegraph during the Greco-Turkish War of 1897.[1][2]

Political career

In 1900 Peel was appointed a member of the Royal Commission formed to inquire into the operation of the Port of London. In the same year he began his political career when he was elected to the London County Council.[1] He was a member of the pro-Conservative grouping on the council that became the Municipal Reform Party. He was leader of the Party from 1908 to 1910 and chairman of the county council from 1914 to 1916.[1][2] He had begun his Parliamentary career when he was elected as Liberal Unionist MP for Manchester South at a by-election. At the next general election in 1906 he stood unsuccessfully at Harrow. He returned to the Commons in 1909, when elected as Conservative MP for Taunton at a by-election.[2] He inherited his father's viscountcy in 1912, and moved to the House of Lords.

Peel was appointed a Deputy lieutenant of Bedfordshire[3] and lieutenant-colonel of the Bedfordshire Yeomanry in 1912, and on the outbreak of the First World War moved to France with his regiment. Due to ill health he returned to Britain in 1915. In 1918 he received his first government post as Joint Parliamentary Secretary at the Department of National Service. In 1919 he became Under-Secretary of State for War and a member of the Privy Council.[1][2] Two years later he became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Transport.

He entered the cabinet in 1922 as Secretary of State for India as part of the coalition government of David Lloyd-George but continued in the post after the downfall of the Coalition during the premierships of Bonar Law and Baldwin. Baldwin's Government fell in January 1924, but after a brief spell in opposition was returned to power at the 1924 General Election. Peel was appointed First Commissioner of Works in the Conservative administration formed by Stanley Baldwin. In 1928 he briefly returned to the India Office before the Conservatives lost power at 1929 general election.[2] The latter year he was created Viscount Clanfield, of Clanfield in the County of Southampton, and Earl Peel.[1] When a Conservative-dominated National Government was formed after the 1931 election he became Lord Privy Seal. He only held this office for two months, leaving government in November.[2]

In 1932 he was appointed chairman of the Wheat Commission, and in 1934 chaired the Royal Commission on the Common Law.[2] In 1936-1937 Lord Peel was the chairman of the Peel Commission which presented for the first time in its period the British Mandate of Palestine as the solution of partition for the Jewish - Arab conflict in Palestine.[2]

Family

Lord Peel married the Hon. Eleanor, daughter of James Williamson, 1st Baron Ashton, in 1899. They had two children. In 1929 Lord Ashton died and Peel succeeded him as chairman of James Williamson and Company. He was also a director of Barclays Bank and of the Great Northern Railway.[1][2] Lord Peel

died aged 70 at his home in East Meon, near Petersfield, Hampshire in 1937 after a long illness.[1][2] He was succeeded in his titles by his son, Arthur.

From Freddie Standfield's book

(information not covered in other pieces already included).

Lord Ashton. In 1885 he gave a breakfast in Lancaster, when 10,000 people sat down to his bacon and eggs, marmalade, butter and tea. Having been elected a Liberal MP in 1886, he retired from parliament in his early 50s, only to be confronted with political attacks alleging he had bought his peerage.

Stung by such hostility during the first 1910 election, he publicly threatened to withdraw from every charity and organisation to which he had hitherto subscribed; a threat carried out to the full when the attacks were repeated at the following year's municipal elections ...

Having quarrelled violently with Lancaster town council, matters were patched up and he generously built a magnificent new town hall. But, prior to its completion, the council annoyed him, and he not only declined to attend the opening ceremony, but ever after refused even to look at the building, drawing his carriage blinds when passing by. Ashton died in 1930 aged 87, leaving the then tremendous fortune of £10,000,000, but no will. So, after the payment of death duties, his only child, Eleanor, became immediately entitled to half the residue of the estate, plus a reversionary interest in the other half, expendant on the death of the widow (his third wife).

Eleanor, born in 1872, was married in 1899 to William Robert Wellesly Peel, grandson of the famous Sir Robert, and son of the first Viscount, Speaker of the House of Commons. Her father's main wedding gift was a settlement of £800,000, probably an ingredient in an 'arranged' marriage rather than a love match.

Lady Peel had previously had dealings with Hooydonk Brothers who, as Decorative Artists, prepared and executed elaborate interior schemes for homes of the 'moneyed classes'. She turned to this firm to design a country mansion, complete with decorations and furnishings, though Hooydonk Brothers called in London architects to prepare architectural drawings of the shell of the building. ... The house was magnificent, with its huge and lofty entrance hall, backed by a handsome wooden staircase of unique design, and spacious, elegant reception rooms. These rooms, and indeed all other main rooms, had beautifully moulded Georgian style ceilings, and throughout the building the impression was of elegance without vulgarity. Hooydonk Brothers more than justified the faith placed in them by a demanding employer, though Auguste van Hooydonk, on his frequent visits, was invariably faced with luncheon of cold pheasant – not his favourite food – because, according to her ladyship, the pheasants were shot on the estate and she could not afford butchers' prices. Nevertheless, Hooydonk and Eleanor Peel set up a real and lasting friendship'

As for the garden and pleasure grounds, George Cannings worked there for 17 years:

To start with there were 14 gardeners, including a man who looked after and worked the horse used for hauling. A donkey pulled the lawn mower. I was in the kitchen garden nearly all the time, but also carted large quantities of coke from West Meon railway station for greenhouse fuel. The kitchen garden comprised seven acres, plus an orchard and extensive greenhouses, where grapes, peaches, nectarines, tomatoes, cucumbers and potted plants were grown. I was always well treated and content with my 30s a week wage and rent-free cottage and free firewood.

From 1927 onwards, the summers saw brilliant weekend parties, the guests once including Mr Winston Churchill whom Lady Peel subsequently described as 'a very rude man'. In winter, pheasant shooting was organised by the head of three gamekeepers, Harry Dean, tall and heavily built, with rosy cheeks and genial disposition, and invariably dressed in a traditional heavy tweed knickerbocker suit. Beaters included estate employees, other local men and schoolboys. Jack Aburrow vividly recalls such days when, as a boy of 12, and wearing short trousers, he endured painful bramble scratches on his bare legs to earn 5s a day plus bread, cheese and beer for lunch and, if lucky, a rabbit worth 8d to take home at dusk.

As for the lifestyle and characters of the couple who created what is thought to be the last 'purpose-built' English mansion, East Meon people (apart from employees) saw little of Lord Peel. His distinguished political career necessitated having a London home, No 34 Holland Park, W1, where he mostly lived, except for weekends and parliamentary vacations. His personal chauffeur, Clement Allman, until recently farming 190 acres near Leydene, describes him as a considerate employer, though strict about good time-keeping. When his lordship was driven to other parts of the country in his 5.5 litre Daimler, staying overnight in the best hotels, Allman was similarly accommodated, and when in London had his own flat at 34 Holland Park.

A picture emerges of an essentially serious-minded individual, probably too fully occupied with affairs of state to regard Leydene as more than a magnificent 'country retreat'. Certainly he was a keen shot, not only at Leydene bi annually on the Scottish grouse moors near Beaufort Castle, and Allman remembers Peel's regular visits to the shooting grounds of an Inverness gunsmith for a warm-up at clay pigeons to get his eye in before tackling grouse. Yet even shooting parties were apparently a means to an end, affording opportunities for diplomatic entertainment of British and other political personalities.

Lady Peel had inherited from her father an active brain, outstanding financial acumen, a pronounced antipathy towards local authorities and (in old age at least) an urge to benefit certain charitable causes. Puzzling, though, was an extreme reserve almost amounting to pathological shyness. She abhorred London, was a fresh air fanatic, habitually dressed like a tramp in ankle-length shabby black clothes, but found some degree of contentment at Leydene, though preferring the even greater isolation available in Scotland. Mother of a son and daughter, she had no liking for children, her own or other people's.

In 1928 she was at war with the then local authority, Petersfield R.D.C, whom she sued for £7.17.7d, being the 'estimated cost of keeping six visitors for four days

in excess of their invitation', through the council's failure to clear snowbound roads.!

For her, life at Leydene tended to be quiet, perhaps lonely. Apart from a friendship with Lady and Miss Du Boulay, here tenants at what was then Upper House, Oxenbourne (now Oxenbourne House), she seemed without local friends. On a typical non-entertaining day, she would appear outside the mansion about mid-morning, carrying a large basket filled with bread and toast. After inspecting the rainfall gauge and weather chart, she invariably met and spoke, often at length, with Tyrode, now the head of three chauffeurs (excluding Allan, his lordship's chauffeur, usually in London). Next came a shorter conversation with the head gardener, who always had 11 or more other gardeners under him. But the climax of the morning was a visit to her herd of pedigree Saddleback pigs, wach of which had its own name – the recipients of the bread and toast.²

Leonard Cannings, cousin of George Cannings and living at Coombe Cross Cottages, was one of the gardeners from about 1922 till 1939, working in the glasshouses, then in the kitchen garden, and also tending pigs.

Her ladyship was very fond of her pigs, and when a sow had to be taken by lorry to be mated with a prize boar, she would travel with it to ensure all went according to plan. I also remember an occasion when I was trimming the grass edges of small circles cut in the lawn where trees and shrubs were planted, when I realised her ladyship, watch in hand, was standing beside me. I must have looked startled, because she said she was timing each trimming circle operation so as to calculate how long it would take to do all the circles. Another peculiar arrangement affecting my job arose when the ground were opened to the public, and we gardeners, having had to put in overtime beforehand, were each paid an extra 5s in cash with the balance of our wage entitlement in kind – tomatoes!

Len Cannings' wife, Edith, employed as a kitchen maid at Leydene from 1926 to 1930, provides a glimpse of life completely in the 'upstairs, downstairs' tradition.

The cook had her own sitting room, and I think the lady's maid had hers too. In the servants' hall the butler presided over two footmen, four housemaids, and the hall boy, but I an the scullery made were the lowest of the low, and not allowed to use the servants' hall. Our only sitting room was the kitchen. When Lady Peel was alone at Leydene, she often knitted, read and listened to the wireless all at the same time, and frequently had nothing but a bowl of soup for lunch, usually served on an outdoor verandah, irrespective of the weather. Sometimes I was take by road to 34 Holland Park for a few days, with a housemaid, a footman and the lady's maid. Mr Tyrode drove an open car, Lady Peel sat in the front seat beside him doing a crossword puzzle, and the rest of us in the back were

² Straight out of P.G.Wodehouse – the Empress of Blandings, favourite pig of Lord Emsworth!

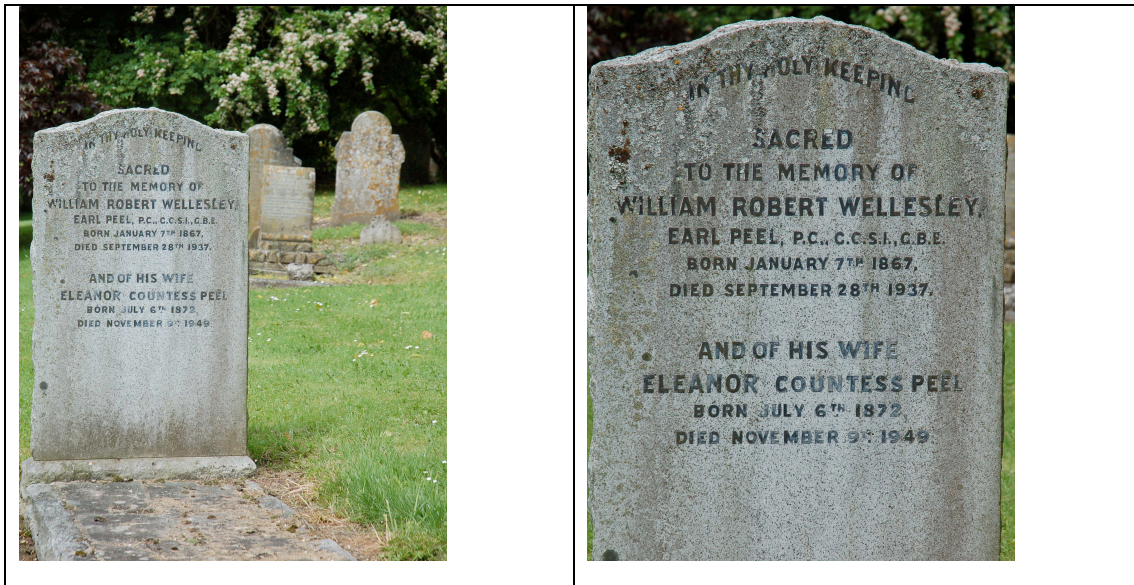
almost frozen to death. In the four years I was in her employ I cannot remember Lady Peel ever speaking directly to me.

After buying the estate on which Leydene was built, Eleanor Peel acquired numerous adjacent farms and estates until her land empire comprised over 10,300 acres. Taking a practical interest in its management, she frequently accompanied a partner of her agents, Hewitt and Lee, when matters such as repairs, improvements and rent adjustments necessitated farm inspections. Though habitually striking a hard bargain, and rightly described as 'close with her money', she was a good landlord in the sense that repairs or improvements that were her responsibility were always carried out to a high standard. But contact with tenants on a personal level was, with one exception, virtually non-existent. Indeed, she would go out of her way to avoid casual meetings with everyone, whether they were staff, tenants, or other country fold. The exception was Cecil Kille, tenant of Stoneylands Farm, who supplied dairy produce to Leydene. He was widely regarded as her 'favourite', but his daughter (now Mrs Joan Walther), who as a child rode her pony to the big house with urgent deliveries of cream of whatever was needed at short notice, thinks Lady Peel simply respected her father's hard-working and thrifty character.

Each summer, the Peels and most domestic staff from Leydene and 34 Holland Park headed north for a prolonged stay in Scotland, usually at Beaufort Castle, Inverness-shire. Staff travelled by night train, and on arrival had a day off duty to recover, then worked for 11 weeks without break, occasionally until midnight, until rewarded with another day off before returning to London. The Peels travelled by car, sometimes calling at Lancaster en route, for business conferences relating to the linoleum business. Following Lord Ashton's death, Eleanor satisfied her father's wish and her own business ability by becoming governing director of the company, with her husband as chairman. The business continued to prosper.

In Scotland, when Peel was leading grouse-shooting parties on the moors, Eleanor never joined these expeditions, going salmon fishing instead with Tyrode, whose position in the household was becoming increasingly important. "Officially I was chauffeur, but it might be more correct to describe my job as the buffer between Lady Peel and the social world she didn't care a lot for". So perhaps it was unsurprising that Tyrode, too, became a salmon fisherman, sharing the sport with his employer, and also making a second fishing trip to Scotland with her each spring.

In 1937, Lord Peel died at Leydene, aged 170, and was buried in East Meon churchyard, having shown virtually no interest in local affairs. Two years later, Eleanor bought Hendersyde, a famous 16,000 acre estate in Southern Scotland. Disliking the existing mansion, she promptly pulled it down and built a more modern residence; but, reluctant to miss the Tweed's salmon fishing season during the rebuilding, stayed in a cottage by the river, the home of elderly Mr and Mrs A. Brown, where she 'lived in the most simple fashion, just like any of the village folk.



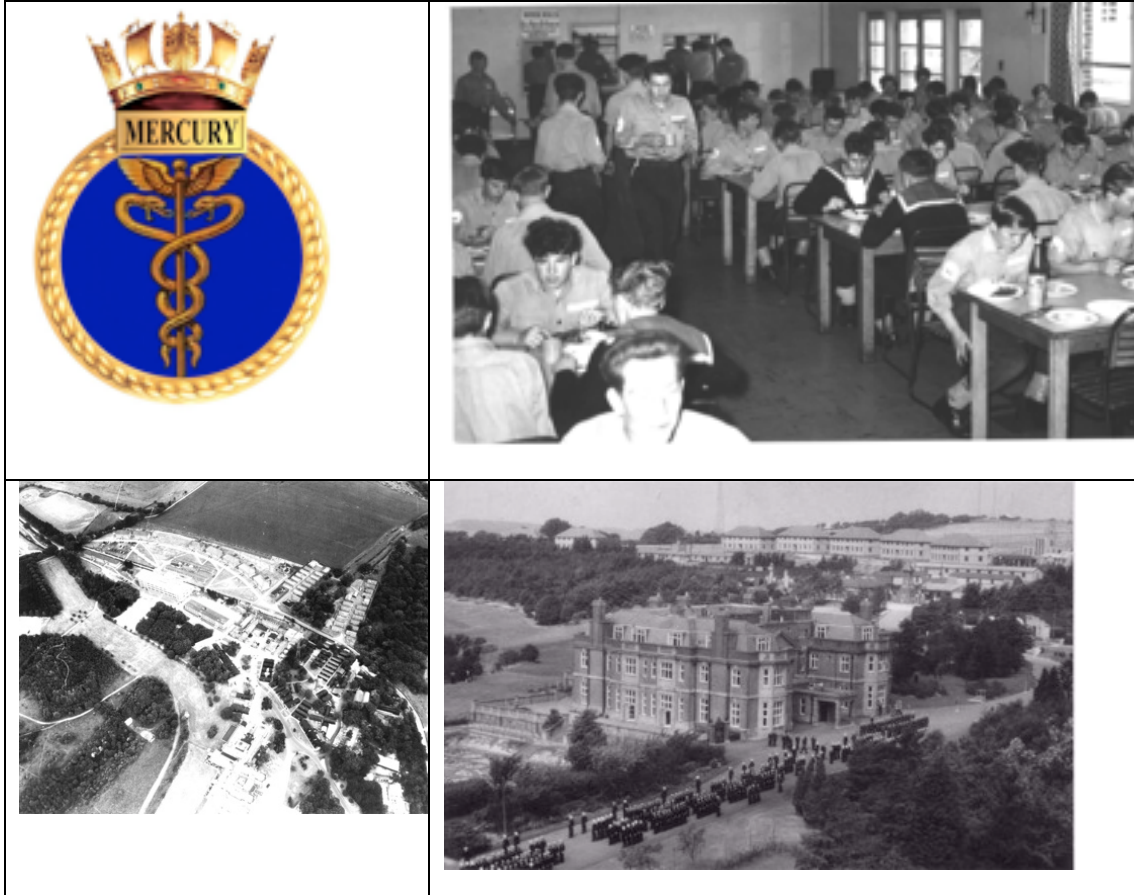
Eleanor, Dowager Countess Peel, died at Hendersyde Park on 9th November 1949, aged 77, survived by her son, the second earl, and her daughter Lady Doris Blacker and, like her husband, she was buried at East Meon. Her estate, estimated at over four million pounds, was cut by death duties to just under one million, which, after payment of modest legacies and annuities, became a trust fund, the income from which was particularly to benefit 'old people and needy cases where people have fallen on evil days through no fault of their own.' Significantly, her will precluded grants to 'charitable bodies primarily devoted to children, or which are under the control of the central or any local government'. The capital value of the trust fund has since risen to over two million pounds³ and income for 1982 comfortably exceeded £200,000. Leydene and 100 acres had been bought by the Admiralty in 1949 and in May 1953, the remainder of the estate was sold by auction in 51 lots, many of which were gratefully acquired by sitting tenant farmers. An era had ended.

Lewis Tyrode, the grocer's boy who for 44 years worked as trusted chauffeur, friend and right-hand man, and perhaps knew and understood Lady Peel better than any other living person, was rewarded by his multi-millionairess employer with an annuity of £5 a week. Ethel Loasby, her maid for 20 years, received a legacy of £400 and Mrs H Brown, widow of her boatman, had an annuity of £2 a week. Almost the last word came from the High Court which, in the person of Mr Justice Barnard, decreed that certain passages in the will which would cause 'pain and embarrassment' should be omitted when probate was granted and the will's contents made public.

³ Written in 1984

HMS Mercury

From 'A History of the Leydene Site' by Russell Searle of RJD Technology, with whose permission we can use extracts



Pre-1941 the primary Naval Signal School was situated in HM Dockyard Portsmouth, near H.M.S. Victory. In 1938, there had been plans to move the Signal School out of Portsmouth to Stamshaw, its new name would have been HMS Swiftsure. These plans were shelved due to the outbreak of the Second World War (WWII) in September 1939.

The huge increase in numbers of personnel requiring communications training following the outbreak of WWII, and the geographic diversity of the fleet and dockyards, resulted in a host of additional signals training establishments being set up. A list of these Naval signal schools is at Annex B.

Heavy bombing and damage of Dockyard buildings and the surrounding areas, during 1940 and 1941, imposed severe restrictions on communications training. The staff and students of the school were required during the nights to provide fire parties and sentries on the dockyard walls. On 10 March, a very heavy raid caused almost total destruction of the Dockyard and H.M.S. Vernon.

The decision was then made to move training, research and accommodation facilities away from the Portsmouth area.

The Experimental Section had already moved to Lythe Hill House at Haslemere, and King Edward School at Witley. The radio and headquarters sections went to Lythe Hill and radar section to Witley. The reason for this was two fold. First the rapid development of technology such as radio, radar and HF/DF had expanded the section and secondly, the bombing had damaged the workshops.

This split of the experimental sections from the training section, lost one of the great advantages of the school, that of enabling the trainers to keep up to date on latest developments and of the researchers to know what the 'users' wanted.

Leydene House and estate, had been earmarked for requisitioning since 4 November 1940, initially by the Ministry of Health, but later as an accommodation site for the Signal School

On 19 April 1941, approval was given by the Admiralty to requisition Leydene house and estate and on 20 April, the Chief Surveyor of Lands made a signal stating possession could taken forthwith.

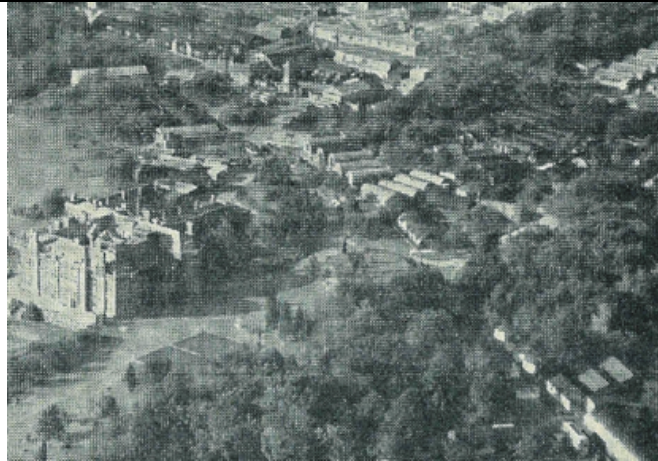
On 22 April, Captain G.H. Warner, who had assumed command of the Signal School the previous day, visited Leydene House, to establish what needed to be done to accommodate the school. Lady Peel reluctantly agreed to the arrangement and remained in her estate in Scotland, letting her agent deal with all the necessary details.

While arrangements were being made for the transfer of the Signal School, a land mine was dropped on the site. However, this was the last hostile act of the Germans against Leydene. Prior to the move to Leydene, working parties arrived to prepare the site for occupation. Tents for accommodation had to be erected and the interior of the house had to be rearranged into classrooms, offices and various messes. The garage complex was converted into five classrooms by bricking up the entrances and providing access between them.

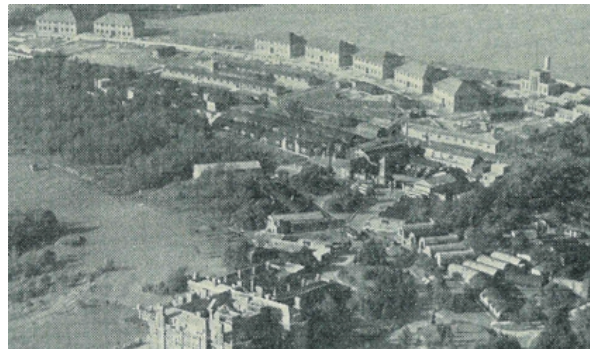
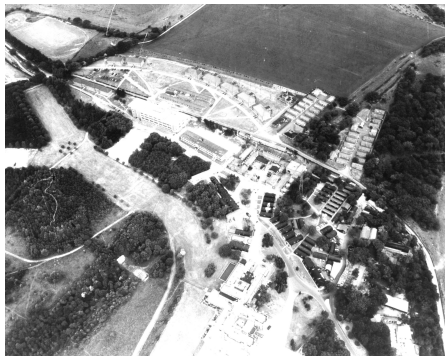
One of the first working parties of junior ratings used the large kitchen as a mess and slung their hammocks between the legs of the big upturned kitchen tables. Arrangements were made for the storage of Lady Peel's furniture and possible employment of her estate staff. Contracts were also awarded for the erection of Nissen huts. Also, duplicate classroom equipment and instructional equipment needed to be found and put in place to reduce lost training time to a minimum.

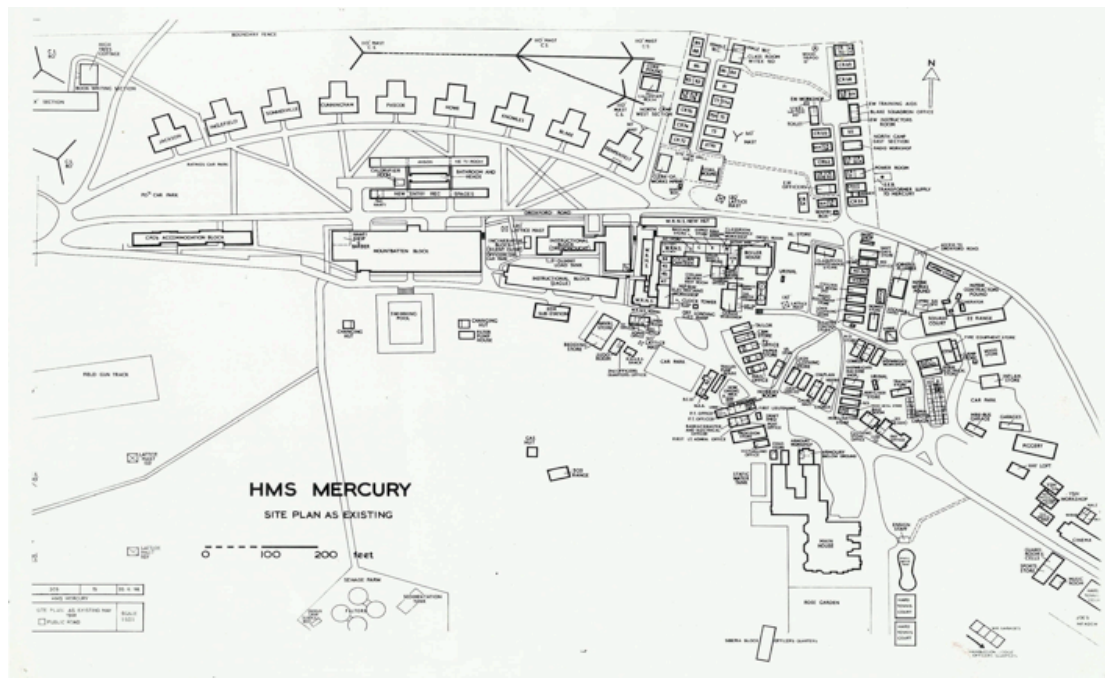
On 16 August 1941, the Leydene site was commissioned as HMS Mercury and the Signal School moved lock stock and barrel to its new environment. Only one training day had been lost.

The first contingent of ratings numbered 300. They were accommodated in bell tents and messed in Leydene House. Until alternative buildings could be constructed, the Main House was used for all purposes; messes, classrooms and domestic usage. During the autumn and winter of 1941, Nissen huts were erected, along the area south of the Droxford Road and became known as West and East Camps, separated by the garages.



The first semi-permanent buildings to be constructed commenced in April 1944 and were the classrooms of North Camp. However, the land was not actually requisitioned until January 1945. These were Ministry of War building (MOWB) style huts and the area was eventually completed in 1947. It comprised of two areas, separated by the ancient Cross Dykes, which was crossed by two footpaths at the north and south ends of the camp. Initially these buildings were used for the training of RNVR officers in W/T and Radio Mechanics. Later, the north eastern part of the camp became home to the 'S' branch and EW sections.





A Wardroom annex was constructed to the south of the Main House and completed on 12 February 1943 at a cost of £861 and became known as Siberia Block. This block was capable of accommodating 19 junior officers in cramped single cabins.

The first amenity building, a large Nissen style structure, was completed along the road from the Main Gate, in July 1943 and was used as a cinema, theatre and assembly hall. The interior was completely refurbished in August 1961, using a generous grant of £2,000 from the Nuffield Trust.

(There is a great deal more information about the development of the Leydene site by the Navy)

After the Navy

It might be worth looking into the sale and development of the site a) as executive housing in the 1990s and of the Sustainability Centre and b) the current state, with developers attempting to find an economically viable use of the site to the south of the road.